

Basic Talking Points on H. Con. Res. 55

The failure to bring an AUMF to the House floor is just one more demonstration of how the Republican Leadership cannot govern – it can't govern on issues related to jobs, the economy, infrastructure, health care, the budget or immigration – and now it can't even govern on matters related to war and peace, one of our most sacred duties under the Constitution.

H. Con. Res. 55 is not an AUMF – It is a resolution designed to force debate and action on an AUMF by the end of the year (over the next 6 months).

- H. Con. Res. 55 is a privileged resolution using the mechanisms of the War Powers Resolution (WPR), to bring before the House a resolution for withdrawal of U.S. armed forces from Iraq and Syria since Congress has failed to enact a statutory authorization for the deployment of those forces into hostilities or a situation where hostilities may be imminent. *This type of resolution can only be brought up in the absence of an AUMF or Declaration of War having been enacted.*

Members have waited patiently for the House Leadership to bring an AUMF to the floor for debate and action, but nothing is happening, and it appears that there is no political will to act.

- It has been over 11 months since the House approved H. Con. Res. 105 in the 113th Congress (7/25/14) by a vote of 370-40, which states, “The President shall not deploy or maintain U.S. Armed Forces in a sustained combat role in Iraq without specific statutory authorization for such use enacted after the debate of the adoption of this concurrent resolution.”
- It has been over 10 months since the U.S. began sustained air combat bombing operations over Iraq and Syria, beginning on August 17, 2014.
- It has been over 4 months since the President sent a draft AUMF to Congress (2/11/15) to address the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere.

Congress has the Constitutional responsibility to debate and vote on an authorization for the use of military force (AUMF) when U.S. Armed Forces have been deployed into hostilities or situations where hostilities may be imminent. Failure to act on the President's draft AUMF or an alternative is not only an abrogation of this Constitutional duty, but it also abdicates to the Executive Branch increased powers in matters of war and peace. This is unacceptable and sets a dangerous precedent for future conflicts.

- The Constitution could not be more clear that it is Congress that determines whether the U.S. shall engage in war or deploy U.S. troops abroad: Article I, Section 8, clause 11 states that only Congress has the power to declare war. Since the end of the Vietnam War, Congress has used the specific statutory authorization for the use of military force (AUMFs) as the *de facto* mechanism for engaging in conflicts, from Bosnia and Kosovo, to Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2002).

It is time for the Congress “to fish or cut bait” on the war in Iraq and Syria: Either bring forward an AUMF and authorize the war, or bring our troops home to their families. H. Con. Res. 55 gives the House leadership 6 months to take up an AUMF, debate it and vote on it – or, in failing to do so, require the President to withdraw U.S. Armed Forces from the region. The ball is in Congress’s court.

- For U.S. re-entry into Iraq and the expansion of U.S. military operations inside Syria to address the threat of the Islamic State (ISIS/ISIL), Congress has failed to authorize the deployment of over 3,500 U.S. troops on the ground in Iraq; over 17,000 airstrikes in Syria and Iraq; and the expenditure of over \$2.74 Billion – or roughly \$9.1 million per day.
- Congress keeps authorizing and appropriating the money, equipment and troops to carry out this war, while failing to take any responsibility for authorizing the war.
- If Congress has the will to spend billions of dollars on this war; if Congress has the will to send our uniformed men and women to fight, and possibly die, in this war; then Congress should demonstrate it has the will to act responsibly and authorize this war – or it should end it, and bring our troops home.